Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06627158

EO 13526
3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
EO 13526
3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs
EO 13526
3.5(c)

[redacted]

SECRET

3.5(c)

MICROFILMED

MICRO ONLY

Roberto Eduardo VIOLA
(Phonetic: veeOHlah)

ARGENTINA

OFFICE OF
CENTRAL REFERENCE
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

President (since March 1981)

Addressed as:
Mr. President

A shrewd, self-assured politician, Lt. Gen. (ret.) Roberto Viola was chosen by the ruling military junta to serve a three-year term as his country's highest official. He will be Argentina's second military president since the coup that ousted President María Estela Peron in 1976. Before his selection, Viola had to fight a fierce, secret battle with the military hierarchy over his future powers as president. He emerged from that fight with his authority intact. He will nonetheless have to work intimately with the junta, which is composed of the commanders of each of the three military services. A career army man, Viola has a reputation among his peers as a competent but low-key staff officer. His real talent is for political maneuvering, which he used in the Army to build a base of support. He has also maintained ties to civilian labor and political groups. Viola has been described by US Embassy officials as a moderate with a breadth of political vision. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Goals for the New Administration

Viola's two major domestic priorities are economic recovery and greater political freedom for Argentina. He intends to combat the problems of inflation, an overvalued peso, and the balance of payments by continuing the previous administration's policy of encouraging a liberal economy dominated by private enterprise. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Although he fully expects the military to remain in power until the late 1980s, Viola has stated that they have accomplished their primary purpose for being in public life--the war against subversion is over. He therefore intends to begin the slow

5197125 -2

(cont.)

[redacted]

SECRET

3.5(c)

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06627158

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06627158

process of returning Argentina to civilian rule. One of his goals is to introduce legislation enabling political parties to function normally again after a five-year hiatus. 3.5(c)

Foreign Policy

During his tenure as President, Viola plans to concentrate on improving his country's image abroad by mending fences with Latin American and European nations and by working out a solution to the Beagle Channel dispute with Chile in conjunction with the papal mediation effort begun under Videla. He has initiated dialogue with US officials on a wide range of issues, including human rights, the grain embargo, and nuclear development. 3.3(b)(1)

3.5(c)

Early Life and Career

Viola graduated from the Argentine Military Academy in 1944 as an infantry officer. He subsequently worked his way up through the ranks, holding a variety of important positions. He served as Commander in Chief of the Army and a member of the ruling junta from 1978 until he resigned in December 1979. 3.5(c)

Personal Data

3.3(b)(1)

Viola, 56, is married to the former Nelida Gregorio; the couple has two children and two grandchildren. Viola speaks French, Italian and some English. 3.5(c)

18 May 1981

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06627158